



Minnesota State University, Mankato
**Cornerstone: A Collection of Scholarly
and Creative Works for Minnesota
State University, Mankato**

Honors Capstone Portfolios

Honors Program at Minnesota State University,
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Alexis Poetter Honors Portfolio

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HELLO,

I'm Lexi.

Nice to meet you!

I'm a student and aspiring creative with a multifaceted interdisciplinary major focusing in marketing, graphic design, and consumer studies. Through the links below, you can take a look at my journey towards personal and academic growth and discovery.

These are my pursuits:

To radiate creativity, to grow from every new experience, to foster kindness and understanding toward others, to build meaningful relationships with those whose experiences are different from mine, and to learn from my mistakes along the way. Above all, to discover the beauty in every day life, make others smile, and find happiness within myself and the world around me.

[Creative Expression](#)[Personal Initiative](#)[Interpersonal Learning](#)

Creative Expression

Also known as research

I've chosen to reframe the research competency to what I call **creative expression**. I have a need to be creative. I find ways to incorporate my creativity into not only my fields of study but also into my extracurricular activities and personal life. Research can exist in many shapes and sizes besides what it is traditionally thought of in the academic space. For me, **research is a byproduct of my creative process**. Though the process is different, creative work often requires similar aspects to traditional research. It begins with gathering information and ends with some form of discovery.

Original Honors Research Statement

"Upon graduation, honors students will have demonstrated the ability to exhibit information literacy skills, synthesize and integrate ideas, produce original research or creative works, and contribute to knowledge."

[Visit Honors website](#)

Browse Experiences

"Lessons from Railing Dwellers"

"Fetty Wap's Drop Out"

"Spilled Milk"

"Two Legs and Two Feet"

Virtual Research Symposium

Synthesizing Essay

The stereotypical and traditional meaning of research in the academic space brings to mind labs and quantitative data – but through my Honors journey, I discovered how to conduct research in my own creative disciplines. Since my minor is creative writing, my research projects came naturally in the form of written works in both creative non-fiction and fiction genres. I realized that for me, my creative process is my research.

My first steps toward understanding this came with the writing of a [creative non-fiction piece titled "Lessons from Railing Dwellers and Evening Shoppers"](#). I chose a research goal and began exploring unique questions that lead me to the creation of a reflective essay. I explored themes of stereotyping and judgement, and within these concepts I found links to my own experiences. I conducted field research and online research, and then reflected on my findings using creative writing as a tool. During the process, I learned the importance of being candid in the writing of creative non-fiction. I submitted my final essay to the Robert C. Write Minnesota Writer's Endowment Scholarship as my first step toward dissemination. The process provided me with helpful insight to the world of dissemination and lead me to consider sending future stories to publication. The concepts I learned from this experience helped me during the research phase of future creative non-fiction projects, one of which included a journalism piece.

The [investigative non-fiction project titled "Fetty Wap's Drop Out"](#) showed me yet another side of creative research, this time in the form of investigative citizen journalism. Working with a team opened a new avenue to complete research and helped us build our skills together, and coming in with prior research experience helped me during the process of information gathering. We conducted primary research that helped us organize the truth into one cohesive journalistic piece. Along the way, we ran into roadblocks – including dead-end leads – but we moved forward and found answers to several questions that we, and many other MSU students, had. We self-published these piece on the web as a way to share our work. In the end, I found that while creative non-fiction projects were interesting to me, they also prompted me to consider delving into fiction, to which I have always been more drawn.

Immersing myself in fiction allowed me to discover my true passion in writing and consequently drove me to further develop my research skills in my preferred genre. The writing of fiction short stories ["Spilled Milk"](#) and ["Two Legs and Two Feet"](#) both lead me to huge growth in my writing process, style, and voice. I was able to take the concepts of research goals and information gathering I learned from creative non-fiction and re-apply them to fiction. I focused on developing my own unique fiction writing style, which began with studying the works of other authors, analyzing their techniques, and synthesizing a knowledge base of creative tools gathered from the diverse approaches to writing I observed.

Through my experiences, I gained the confidence to attempt dissemination by submitting "Spilled Milk" to the University of Minnesota, Duluth's Aisthesis Journal. My story wasn't chosen, but that led me to the decision to share my other story, "Two Legs and Two Feet." I originally intended on sharing this work through a public reading at a local art gallery, but my plans were cancelled due to COVID-19. Instead, I submitted a recording of myself reading an excerpt from my story to the [virtual Undergraduate Research Symposium](#), which led me to some new realizations about the difference between live and recorded/virtual presentations.

My exploration of creative writing genres has helped me build my own voice with stylistic choices and develop a strong research and writing process. Going forward with future writing projects, I know I can be confident in my abilities to uncover inspiring stories and demonstrate my knowledge of creative writing techniques.

Personal Initiative

Also known as leadership

I've chosen to reframe the leadership competency to what I call **personal initiative**. For me, being a leader is much more of a personal affair than the word suggests, and I believe it comes in many different forms – big and small. **The motivation to step up comes from within** and no matter how involved the role may be, that personal effort deserves recognition. Leadership isn't about taking on every role in sight, climbing a ladder, or having authority. It's about taking it upon yourself to get involved, to make change, and to go above and beyond **in your own way**. And many times, it's about finding your niche, connecting with others, and following your passions.

Original Honors Leadership Statement

"Upon graduation, honors students will have demonstrated the ability to utilize personal leadership values and guide groups toward a common goal."

[Visit Honors website](#)

Browse Experiences

My Mentor Philosophy

FPC Board: Style Council

Creative Director: MNTM Photoshoots

Fall & Spring Fashion Shows

Synthesizing Essay

At the beginning of my Honors journey, leadership was one of the areas that frightened me most. By Sophomore year, I finally felt comfortable enough to take charge of my leadership involvement. I took an Honors course called Developing Your Mentor Philosophy, which helped me understand my leadership style and develop self-confidence. When I found my niche in a particular club on campus, things took off. I got involved with Fashion & Photography Club and the community helped reveal my ability to be a role model and leader.

The Developing Your Mentor Philosophy course allowed me to gain a real-world experience of being a mentor to a fellow Honors student. What resulted was a final essay titled **My Mentor Philosophy**. I found similarities between mentorship and leadership and began to see them synonymously. Reflecting on my mentoring experience showed me my strengths as a leader and revealed my values within peer relationships. I found strengths in connecting with others and forming relationships based on common experiences and our human bond. I discovered that my strengths in communication and honesty are key in forming effective teams, which is still true today. This correlated with the results of my StrengthsFinder assessment, helping solidify my leadership style. I learned to get past the stereotypical version of a leader and instead find my own unique leadership path. This took the fear out of leadership and helped set the tone for my future extracurricular roles.

One of the very first extracurricular leadership roles was a project within Fashion & Photography Club (FPC). I worked with a photographer as a creative team and acted as the **creative director for Mankato's Next Top Model (MNTM) photoshoots** to create meaningful images. Learning how to work on a team to manage our time, communicate effectively, and foster creativity was a valuable experience that boosted my confidence. The photographer and I found a professional flow based on our individual strengths, and we both stepped up to compensate for each other's weaknesses. My strengths in connecting with others and building relationships helped aid the photographer's more quiet demeanor. The photographer helped keep us on track and used her fantastic photography skills and eye for detail to capture brilliant images. We also made mistakes, which we learned from and improved upon. A challenge we faced was time management as we had to move quickly to capture the images. We also had to effectively deal with models being late or unable to attend at the last minute, which threw us off our game at first. We eventually learned to roll with things. This experience opened the door for me to step into higher leadership positions.

I found my way onto the club's board and continued taking on more responsibility using the skills I had learned during MNTM. Through my experience on **Fashion & Photography Club's Style Council** team, I learned how to work effectively in a group to reach goals. I gained insight into how an organization functions, how individuals are chosen for specific roles based on their skills, and how everything comes together as a whole. I began helping with event planning, which was one of my most involved leadership experiences. Working as a key player in the development of the club's **fall and spring fashion shows** showed me that you don't need to be the highest member of the organization to participate significantly in the team's success. You can help in your own way by taking initiative without being asked and guiding others where direction is lacking. I stayed true to the values I discovered during my mentoring experience and solidified the keys to my leadership style. Together, my leadership experiences gave me the courage to be bold and self-motivated. I better understand leadership in my own terms and my knowledge of my strengths can help me offset my weaknesses and find success in any situation.

Interpersonal Learning

Also known as global citizenship

I've chosen to reframe the global citizenship competency to what I call **interpersonal learning**. To me, being a global citizen can be boiled down to simply **connecting with people and learning about their experiences**. The concept of global citizenship can feel abstract and intimidating until you think about the root of it. It's about interacting with others who have different experiences, values, and cultures. It's about viewing the world through a frame different from your own and finding common ground. Ultimately, it's about **learning from human connection**.

Original Honors Global Citizenship Statement

"Upon graduation, honors students will have demonstrated the ability to exhibit second language and communication competencies and exhibit cultural competency and awareness."

[Visit Honors website](#)

Browse Experiences

Gender Identity in Afghanistan

Spanish Language Learning Projects

Critical Incident Journals

Language Partners Program

Literary Analyses

Synthesizing Essay

Before a global perspective can be developed, I've learned that understanding begins at the individual level and requires an understanding of the roles language and culture play in developing identities. Bridging gaps between yourself and those who are different from you starts with finding a human connection, exploring differences, uncovering biases within yourself, and working to educate yourself to extinguish those biases.

One of my first steps toward understanding a culture that is different from my own came from my [research paper on gender identity in Afghanistan](#). I began asking deeper questions about the cultural traditions and values that influence beliefs in a certain culture. At times, it was difficult to understand reasons behind others' beliefs, but digging down to the roots gave me new insights. I also gained understanding of the LGBTQ+ community in a new context, and I was able to compare and contrast my cultural upbringing regarding gender identity. I was prompted to consider the underlying factors that influence a person's identity and how that identity impacts a person's life experiences, which I continued to explore through writing and research throughout college.

My [literary analyses of twenty and twenty-first century American immigrant literature](#) took my understanding to the next level and built upon concepts that I learned while studying gender identity in Afghan culture. Using literature to explore themes of discrimination, human rights, identity, self-worth, and more through a cultural lens was a valuable experience because it allowed me follow the individuals' journeys to understand the deep-seated flaws in societal systems that perpetuate prejudice and strip individuals of their culture. I made realizations not only about the characters and their cultural identities, but my own cultural identity and the privileges that come along with it. This was sometimes uncomfortable, but it was crucial.

In combination with my research and literary analyses, I found additional understanding from my [Spanish language learning projects](#). These projects required me to use my Spanish language skills in a way that brought deeper realizations about the relationship between language and culture, specifically the nuanced differences in the Spanish language among Spanish speaking regions. Understanding how subcultures form their own unique variations on their native languages helped me make the connection that culture is based on a variety of different aspects, not just race or ethnicity. My experiences learning about the LGBTQ+ community, the Somali community, and the American Indian community – which formed my [critical incident journals](#) – furthered these concepts. Language, beliefs, values, age, generation, social circumstances, and more all make up cultures and subcultures, the members of which all have unique experiences based on their complex identities.

What helped tie everything together was reflecting on my past [Language Partners Program](#) experience now as a senior. I'm now able to see the experience for its full value, and re-reflecting upon my experience has helped me better understand the role that language plays in the formation of culture, the power dynamics between native and non-native speakers of a language – and proficient an non-proficient speakers –, and the importance of finding common ground to build relationships with and advocate for minority groups. Not only was I able to learn more about my partners' culture and find ways to overcome language barriers, but I was also able to gain new understandings about my own cultural experiences in comparison.